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A SAMPLING OF PORTS OF INTEREST

Bayonne

Formerly known as a city of oil refineries, Bayonne is now a city of trade, services, technology and manufacturing. Located in the heart of the New Jersey-New York metropolitan area, Bayonne offers a unique combination of small town atmosphere and big city convenience. The municipality is proud to work with the Town Center to promote the retail stores, restaurants, professional services, and other businesses located in Bayonne's Broadway area. The City of Bayonne has a new Urban Enterprise Zone, outstanding development properties, convenient mass transit connections, a great school system, and people who care.

Funchal

Funchal city is the capital and owes its name to the plant called "funcho". This plant existed in abundance in this area. Sweets are still made from this plant today. The category of city was granted by King Manuel I, on 21 August, 1508. It's a city of white rows of houses that climb up the hills, like an amphitheatre around a beautiful bay of blue sea. This architectonic distribution, due to the region's rugged and high terrain, covers itself with special beauty to bring in the New Year, since it makes it possible to put on a fireworks display of rare beauty and present a unique festive illumination for the season. Funchal's port is the entry door for many cruise ships as well as for the loading and unloading of goods shipped by sea. The city is divided into three principal areas: on the west side, we have the tourist area where we find most of the hotels; on the east side, the so-called "Zona Velha" or "Cidade Velha" (Old Zone or Old Town), where old constructions predominate, some of them having been transformed into typical restaurants; and the central part, where a great part of the commerce and characteristic monuments are found.

Marigot

One of the most popular Caribbean islands, St. Martin is distinguished by its peaceful colonial history. The French and Dutch have shared its lovely beaches since 1948. Marigot, the French capital, is on the northern coast, where you'll also find excellent golf and tennis facilities at Mullet Bay resort. Philipsburg, the Dutch capital, is to the south.

Norfolk

With its sparkling downtown waterfront, tall glimmering buildings and storied maritime heritage, Norfolk, Virginia stands today as the Mid Atlantic region's most dynamic and progressive cultural center. World-class museums, galleries, intimate performing arts halls and scores of other attractions dot the city's pedestrian-friendly downtown waterfront, while the white sandy beaches of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean lie just minutes away. In fact, this old seaport in the heart of the Virginia Waterfront is experiencing a rebirth so vibrant, the New York Times declared Norfolk a "cultural center of note," while Money Magazine dubbed it "The South's #1 big city to live in." A city as rich in history as there are things to do, Norfolk enjoys a cost of living considerably more generous than most cities, offering business, leisure, and convention traveler the kind of value and entertainment that can be found in few other places. Whatever you choose to do in The New Norfolk, it's easy to see that the old seaport's pulse is beating stronger than ever.

Willemstad

Forget the squat resorts muscling each other along the coast and don't be put off by the disjointed shambles of badly signed roads: Willemstad is gorgeous. The capital of the Netherlands Antilles and one of a select number of urban areas on UNESCO's World Heritage List, it's divided in two by capacious St Anna Bay, the largest harbor in the Caribbean. Punda, to the east, and Otrobanda, to the west, are connected by a quaint pontoon bridge known as the Swinging Old Lady - she cocks a leg for boats. Punda is the oldest part of the city, crowded with 17th- and 18th-century Dutch-style

buildings. The 1732 Mikvé Emanuel Synagogue is the oldest in the Americas. Its interior, including the original pipe organ and brass chandeliers, has been carefully preserved, and the floor is covered in footstep muffling sand. There's an adjacent Jewish Cultural Museum. Fort Amsterdam was once the center of town and now houses the main offices for the government of the Netherlands Antilles. You can see a cannonball lodged in the wall of the fort chapel, a memento of Captain Bligh's 26-day siege in 1804. Also in Punda is the wonderful floating market (mercado flotante). Vendors make the sea trip from Venezuela every morning with fresh fruit, vegetables and seafood - the stalls aren't actually floating, but they're close enough to the water to justify the name. At the eastern end of Willemstad is the Sea Aquarium, where you can get a preview or a recap on the creatures of the deep. You can even dive or snorkel in this controlled environment if the sea seems a little frisky. Head west and across the channel to Otrabanda ('other side'). Otrabanda became Willemstad's first suburb in the late 17th century, when lepers and convicts banished from Punda began moving here. The area's low-rise architecture is the result of an 18th century order not to obstruct Fort Amsterdam's line of fire. Most of the city's historic buildings are in Otrabanda, including the 1734 St Anna Basilica, the oldest in the Antilles. The Riffort, a defensive post on the entrance to the sea, has been used as a telegraph station, radio station, desalination plant, WWII officers' digs, scout hall and is now partly occupied by a ritzy restaurant. Otrabanda's charm extends beyond its brochure-ready buildings. The maze of streets and lanes wiggling back from the waterfront are fun to wander - stores and houses run the gamut from pastel and spruce to crumbling and spooky. Also, much of the advertising and store signage is hand painted, giving the streets perky, individual characters. The Curaçao Museum in western Otrabanda is housed in a 19th-century sailors' hospital. Displays include paintings by early-20th-century Dutch masters, a carillon and a menagerie of other musical instruments, and a hat-making diorama (hats were a source of income for many women up until WWI). There are also worthy exhibitions on the local Indian population and the geology of the ABC islands.

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